

Blacksburg



2046

Comprehensive Plan

*Miller Southside
Neighborhood Master Plan*

Long Range Accepted March 24, 2005

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

PLAN PROCESS AND COMMUNITY

INVOLVEMENT

Introduction and Purpose

The Comprehensive Plan is adopted by Town Council by resolution. The Comprehensive Plan provides statements of goals, general policies, and specific strategies for implementing the town's vision. The plan serves as a general guide for the citizens of Blacksburg, Town Council, the Planning Commission, and Town staff, regarding development and redevelopment in the town. This directly impacts the future development pattern in the neighborhoods in the Town of Blacksburg as well as the Town overall. The Comprehensive Plan calls for the division of the entire town into 24 smaller "Neighborhood Planning Areas" to receive additional planning efforts.

The purpose of conducting Neighborhood Master Planning efforts is to help make the transition from Townwide and sectorwide planning to a smaller and more locally specific set of objectives. Importantly, these objectives are initially drafted by each neighborhood. In this way, local preferences and needs may be identified. The draft Neighborhood Master Plans are resubmitted to the Planning Commission's Neighborhood Planning Committee and the Long Range Planning Committee for refinement and additional input to provide the best compliment possible to the Council adopted Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission accepts the Neighborhood Plan and provides copies to Council and the general public. Because it is important to keep relevant information aggregated, each Neighborhood Master Plan is placed in this Appendix. Each Neighborhood Master Plan is not adopted by Town Council as an amendment to the basic Comprehensive Plan.

While a Neighborhood Master Plan provides general policies, and specific strategies for implementing the town's vision, its focus is neighborhood-specific serving as the neighborhood's input and complement to the Town's Comprehensive Plan. It is assumed, each Neighborhood Master Plan will provide a higher level of detail showing how townwide visions and policies should apply to the smaller defined neighborhood. Therefore, general policies and action strategies are more specific and directed towards a more focused topic or issue. This level of detail may not always dovetail with the larger goals, policies, and strategies of the Comprehensive Plan. A goal of writing Neighborhood Master Plans is to tie action strategies back to the Comprehensive Plan. However, this is not always the case. When reading the Master Plan and using it as a tool to evaluate policies and future projects, one should consider both the

Comprehensive Plan and the Neighborhood Master Plan in their entirety. The use of individual statements should not be used exclusively. In some cases, contradictions may be present between policies, goals, and action strategies. This is an inherent part of long range planning at multiple levels. Values, priorities and other circumstances must be considered when attempting to develop a conclusion in the decision making process.

The neighborhood master planning process can function as a consensus-building tool. Neighborhood citizens can use it as a means to focus efforts within their neighborhood. The process provides a forum for open public discourse and a tool for developing visions, policies, and goals, and strategies to implement them.

Each Neighborhood Master Plan is considered as an additional tool to the Town's official Comprehensive Plan when considering development and redevelopment within an affected neighborhood.

Plan Process

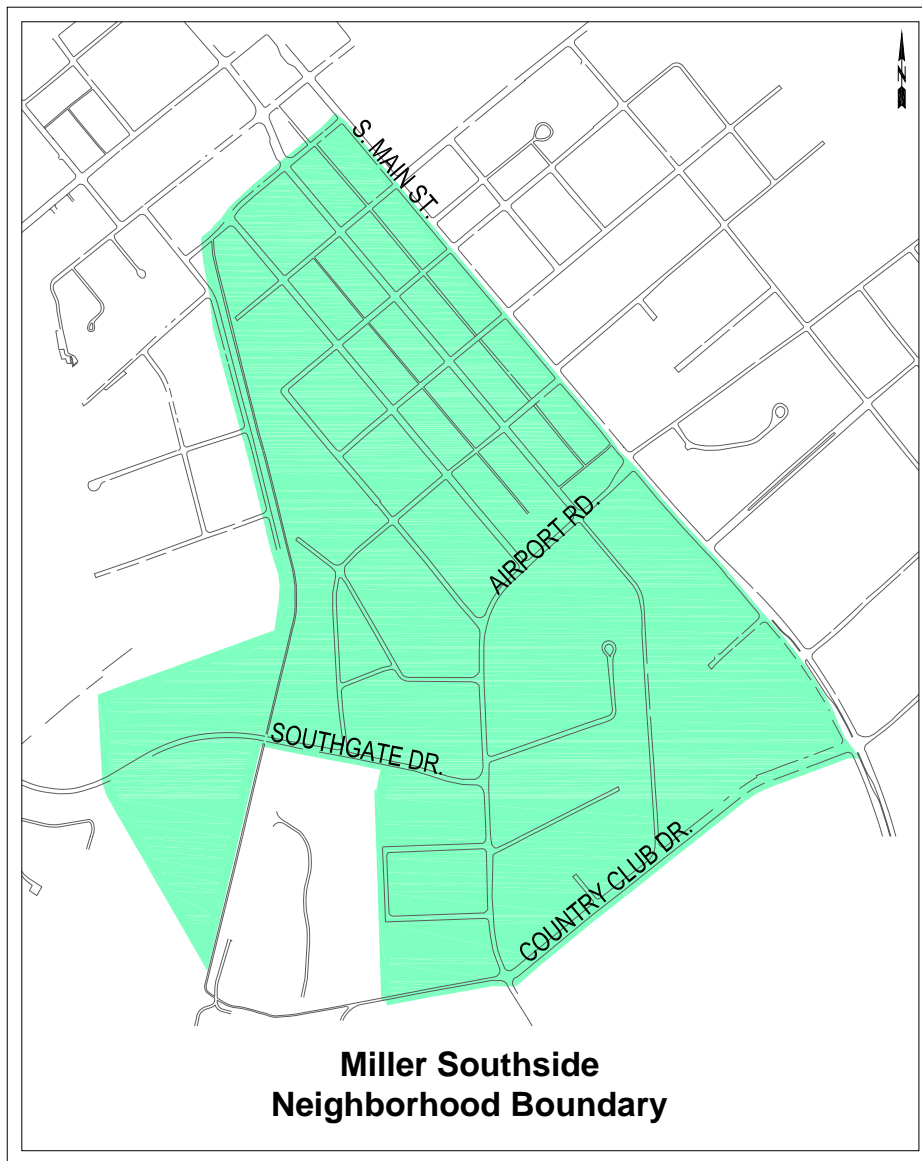
The Miller Southside Neighborhood Master Plan was primarily developed by residents within the Miller Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, with assistance from Town staff. The master planning process began in February 2003 at a Town-hosted neighborhood meeting where residents expressed interest in the development of a neighborhood plan.

From August 2003 to December 2004, a citizen task force composed of Neighborhood Representatives drafted the Miller Southside Neighborhood Master Plan. This culminated in a neighborhood meeting in September 2004, to which all neighborhood residents were invited to review and comment on a draft of the plan. In November 2004, Town staff met with the neighborhood task force and reviewed the comments received at the September meeting and began incorporating these comments into the plan.

The Neighborhood Planning Committee (NPC) of the Planning Commission provided general guidance throughout the plan process. The NPC is composed of citizens from diverse backgrounds and interests; including two planning commissioners, one town council member, and one neighborhood representative. The council position also serves on the Planning Commission. The NPC provided general policy guidance, strategies for receiving public input, and ideas for inclusion in the plan through brainstorming, and review and editing of successive drafts.

In January 2005, the Neighborhood Master Plan was presented to the Long Range Planning Committee for review. The Master Plan was subsequently reviewed by the Long Range Committee and public hearings were scheduled for the Planning Commission in 2005.

Overall, more than 80 neighborhood residents participated in the development of the Miller Southside Neighborhood Master Plan and many more were made aware of the town's planning activities. This extensive community participation helps to ensure that the resulting document expresses the values and vision that the people of Blacksburg and its neighborhoods have for their town. The process has also raised awareness of planning in the community and laid the groundwork for increased community involvement in the future.



GOAL

To summarize the history of the Miller-Southside neighborhood and to provide a sense of the evolution of its eclectic yet cherished character. When viewed within the context of the history of the neighborhood, its street layout, buildings, landscape, and other distinguishing features should serve as a foundation for the conservation of its distinctive character.

BACKGROUND

The Miller-Southside neighborhood (listed officially as the Miller-Southside Neighborhood Planning Area) is one of twenty-four contiguous neighborhood planning areas comprising the Town of Blacksburg, Virginia. Miller-Southside is one of the five neighborhoods included within the Midtown South sector, which is one of the eight Comprehensive Planning Sectors of the Town.

This sector, the boundary of which was created as part of the formulation of the Town's 1996 Comprehensive Plan, is the sixth largest sector and is comprised of nearly thirteen hundred acres. The Miller-Southside neighborhood is comprised of approximately two hundred acres.

The boundaries of the Miller-Southside neighborhood are shown in the introduction chapter. As part of an update to Blacksburg's 2046 Comprehensive Plan, the neighborhood boundaries were formalized in September 1999 at a Town organized meeting of neighborhood residents.

HISTORY

The Miller-Southside neighborhood includes early twentieth century subdivisions recorded as the Southside and Miller Additions that were originally part of farmland known as Fiddlers Green, Miller's Woods and Eakin Farm.

In 1913 a group of local men formed the Southside Land Company, purchased farmland fronting onto South Main Street just southwest of the original town plat. The land was divided into blocks by secondary streets named for the developers – Miller, Ehart, Eakin, Price and Slusser. In later years Price and Slusser streets were renamed as Hemlock Drive and Edgewood Lane. The Southside Land Company offered lots having 50-foot street frontages on Main Street and Water Street [now Draper Road], and 170 feet in depth abutting an 18-foot wide mid-block alley. There were sixteen of these lots to each 400-foot by 358-foot neighborhood block. A prospective buyer could purchase one 50-foot lot, or a lot-and-a-half for 75 feet of frontage, and any additional adjoining lots in 25-foot increments.

The Miller Addition, adjacent land located west of Southside Land Company's holdings, was comprised of two separately owned parcels -- one by the Juanita Miller Rucker family who resided on land known as the Fiddler's Green and the other by A. Warren Miller who resided nearby on a 136-acre-farm called Miller's Woods. In 1919 these parcels were conceptually laid out as one subdivision but developed in phases. The Rucker portion was first to develop as it was nearest to town.

In 1919 J. L. Eakin also began subdividing a portion of his farmland along the south side of Airport Road, formerly Rock Road a thoroughfare to the county seat in Christiansburg.

The 1921 Sanborn map shows the right-of-way for Miller and Eheart streets are each 40 feet wide and Water Street is 50 feet wide. From Miller Street south to Eheart Street, the lot-width frontages are delineated as 50 feet, 75 feet, 75 feet, 100 feet, 50 feet, and 50 feet. The map delineates five houses as 18 feet wide and setback from Main Street 20-25 feet. Two others are noted as 28 feet wide.

A 1927 map of Blacksburg shows a network of streets, alleys and blocks of similar size extending to Airport Road, which allowed this pattern of development to continue over several decades. In 1934, the plat of the Southside Land Company was recorded and became an addition to the town.

Today Miller-Southside is a pedestrian-friendly neighborhood that is distinguished by its diversity of single-family homes and uniqueness as characterized by its tree-lined streets, alleys and lawns. The houses are a mix of large Foursquare houses built in the 1910s, modest cottages and bungalows built in the 1920s, larger colonial-inspired brick structures built in the 1930s, single-story ranchers from the 1950s and a few contemporary homes constructed in the late 1990s. Most houses have detached garages, some with apartments above. Due to the topography some houses have basement apartments with separate entrances. Lawns fronting the streets and hedges along the street frontage, side property lines, and alleyways distinguish the landscape. Several large trees that are over 200-years old also distinguish the neighborhood. One very large white oak stands in front of 206 Eakin Street, a Colonial-Revival house built in 1924.

Many of its buildings and landscape are recorded as one of the Town's two historic districts. In 1988 neighborhood volunteers assisted architect and historian Gibson Worsham in surveying the neighborhood's 835 residential structures and found 127 (as well as 10 houses now occupied by small businesses) were historically significant or substantially contributing structures such that the Miller-Southside Historic District was listed on the National Registry of Historic Places in 1989. Subsequently, the Town Council reviewed an application [ordinance 1060] by residents for design guidelines to preserve these structures, however, it was not fully supported by neighborhood residents and not adopted.

From the beginning covenants were part of the individual landowner's deed. Of particular consequence were restrictions that forbade building businesses or stables in the neighborhood, established a twenty-foot setback and set a minimum value for new construction to assure high quality.

The variety of size and style of houses mirrors its property owners who were and remain community leaders and university faculty. Houses characteristic of the early twentieth century were the Foursquare and the Bungalow. A large number of Foursquare houses were built throughout Blacksburg due to popularity with the college community and partiality of local builders. The Ruckers built a Foursquare in 1912 on the site of the Fiddler's Green homeplace at 500 Draper Road. Wes Gray, a popular local builder, built the Warriner house at 1000 South Main Street in 1924. In that same year another contractor R.R. Reynolds built himself a Foursquare house at 907 South Main. Two other early Foursquare houses were purchased from

Sears & Roebuck. One was erected for the Dehart family in 1912 and still stands today at 106 Airport Road. The other was assembled at 600 South Main Street for the Austin family in 1918 and is occupied today by a fraternity. Another notable Foursquare that originally served as a Methodist parsonage was built on the 604 Preston parcel donated by A. Warren Miller in 1931. The first bungalow in the neighborhood, the Graves house, was built in 1910 at 1001 South Main Street. During the 1920s more than a dozen and a half craftsman-style houses derived from newly published pattern books were built in the Miller Addition.

However, many of the houses were custom built in various styles – Colonial, Georgian or Tudor Revival. The first department head for architecture program at Virginia Tech, Clinton H. Cowgill, was the architect for at least five Colonial-inspired houses built between 1935 and 1938 – for himself at 804 Preston, for George Herring at 601 Preston, for John Whittemore at 900 Draper, for L. C. Beamer at 504 Preston, and for L. B. Dietrick at 506 Preston. Also built during this time, the Crumpacker apartments at 614 South Main Street are a unique among these houses in their adaptation of the Prairie School style.

South of Airport Road the neighborhood includes a mix of commercial and residential development. This “triangle,” bounded by South Main Street, Country Club Drive, and Airport Road, contains 80 residential homes, ten of which are included within the Miller-Southside Historic District, and two banks, two restaurants, a funeral home, professional offices, a day care center, a hair salon, and a music shop. The houses and landscape are similar in style and size as those mentioned above.

Most houses remain owner-occupied, though several along Main Street have been refurbished and now are inhabited by small businesses and professional offices. In 1981, the Town granted Special Use permits to Georgia Anne Snyder Falkinham that allowed several houses in the 500 blocks to change use in exchange for restoration of these houses that were rented as apartments and in disrepair. Between Miller Street and Airport Road, there remain only eleven (11) family-occupied homes within the Miller-Southside neighborhood along S. Main St. In the late 1990’s several more houses in the 900 block of South Main Street were issued Special Use permits for similar uses.

Although some neighborhoods have distinct boundaries defined by roads or geographic situations, some boundaries are less distinctive. Many residents consider adjacent civic, educational and commercial buildings important to its vitality and part of the neighborhood. To the north, there is the Montgomery/Floyd Regional Library, the Blacksburg Police Station, the Town’s Municipal Building as well as various commercial uses. To the south, there is Beeks Elementary School and Gables Shopping Center. “Beeks” completed in 1963, was named for a beloved Blacksburg High School teacher and former principal, Miss Margaret Jerusha Beeks (1892-1992). To the northeast sits the former Blacksburg Middle School that is currently partially occupied by a private school.

Another significant feature is the Huckleberry Trail, which in the early 1990’s transformed the abandoned railroad tracks on the southwestern border of the neighborhood into an asphalt-paved path for walkers, joggers and cyclists. Gibson Worsham’s extensive recording of houses also includes documentation of the opening of this railroad spur from Cambria to Blacksburg in 1904 by the Virginia Anthracite and Coal Railroad and nicknamed the “Huckleberry Railroad.”

Worsham also notes that the first depot was small and in the vicinity of the current library; the second, more substantial one was located where the municipal building is today. Today the trail extends for six miles, from Blacksburg to its southernmost end at the New River Valley Mall on the outskirts of Christiansburg, Virginia. The Huckleberry Trail is highlighted on the map to the left.

Miller-Southside's proximity to these areas is a primary asset as residents can walk, jog, ride a bicycle, or take a bus to run errands, socialize, recreate, relax, attend school, or commute to work.

GOAL

To promote planning and design of the neighborhood in ways that preserve and enhance the pedestrian-centered environment. Neighborhood residents place emphasis on the preservation of the links to the Huckleberry Trail, the downtown area, and on civic involvement.

BACKGROUND

As described in Chapter 2, Neighborhood History + Character, Miller-Southside is one of the oldest residential neighborhoods in Blacksburg. In the early 1900's, the initial subdivision of the land area by the Southside Land Company into long narrow lots oriented east-west served as the primary framework for the planning and design of the Miller-Southside neighborhood. The dimensions of the grid of streets, alleys, and blocks are nearly the same throughout the historic area. In the more recently developed areas North of Airport Road, there are fewer streets and most do not connect to the original network but the residential character is comparable and the planning issues are the same.

Until the 1980's, little formal planning and design activity occurred on an individual basis, as local architects designed custom-built houses. During the 1960's, planning consisted mostly of evaluation of speculative proposals for the development of commercial properties along Main Street south of Faystone Drive plus a few residential developments that are accessed from Airport Road. Sylan Croft is the most recent subdivision, which was approved in 2003.

In 1983, Montgomery County adopted a Comprehensive Plan that acknowledged the importance of its built heritage and spawned interest in surveying historic structures throughout the County. The same year, Montgomery County received a matching grant from the Division of Historic Landmarks and commissioned the renowned historian and architect, Gibson Worsham to explore and document the growth of the County.

Mr. Worsham proceeded to record many facets of the County's history beginning with its legal formation around 1740. His two-volume record includes an enumeration of structures that are classified as "contributing" as well as those classified as "significant". It also describes business and transportation growth, religious influences, and the construction of schools. Findings from this county-wide survey lead several Blacksburg citizens to submit an application to the National Registrar of Historic Places that designated the Miller-Southside Historic District.

Also in the early 1980's there were other planning discussions about permits for additional apartments above garages or in basements of owner-occupied houses. Residents expressed concern about the conversion of single-family homes into small businesses eroding its residential character around its periphery. Town-sponsored planning meetings for an update of the Town's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance resulted in general policies to disallow additional apartments and limit conversion to special use permits, especially for fraternities. More recently there have been additional planning meetings to discuss traffic concerns and safety on its pedestrian-friendly, tree-lined streets.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

MAIN STREET DEVELOPMENT AND PEDESTRIAN LIFE

Opportunities

- Pedestrian links within the neighborhood and between neighborhoods and downtown.
- Downtown commercial and institutional spaces with vital street life.

Challenges

- Gaps and barriers in pedestrian networks and road expansion.
- Vulnerable edges on portions of South Main Street and Country Club Drive pose a threat to the preservation of the neighborhood character.

HOUSING AND RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER

Opportunities

- Low crime rate and well-kept properties.
- Proximity to Virginia Tech makes it especially attractive to university faculty and staff.
- Neighbors tend to know each other.

Challenges

- Potential for unbalanced housing values (through shift to student rentals *or* to exclusively high-income residences).
- Proximity to Virginia Tech appeals to students, encouraging the purchase of homes by non-residents of the neighborhood for conversion to rental properties.
- Residents in adjacent neighborhoods can be noisy at night and in some cases have a different daily lifestyle.

STREET AND PUBLIC CHARACTER

Opportunities

- Presence of undeveloped land within the neighborhood.

Challenges

- Shortage of parks within the neighborhood.

CIVIC ACTIVITY AND ADVOCACY

Opportunities

- High awareness and involvement of residents in Town of Blacksburg government affairs.

Challenges

- Maintenance of Town involvement and facilitation of involvement in Montgomery County government affairs.

GENERAL POLICIES

This Miller-Southside Neighborhood Plan has been written to be coherent with the Town of Blacksburg's Comprehensive Plan. The following general policies of that plan are particularly relevant to the content of this chapter.

- Wide streets are hostile to pedestrians (Community Design, 8.)
- Preserve and enhance pedestrian opportunities in and around the neighborhood (Executive Summary, 38)
- Protect vulnerable edges from automobile-centered commercial encroachment (Neighborhood Planning, 23)
- In established areas, encourage infill development that is compatible with existing and/or planned land use (Town Sections Overview, 4)

- Maintain housing patterns that suit multiple income levels; maintain existing diversity of housing sizes; preserve and/or increase affordability (Economic Development, 39)
- Advocate for town to purchase parkland within the neighborhood, to possibly include the Rugby Field (Parks and Recreation, 20-21, Midtown South, 13, Community Design, 26 and Appendix D: Property Acquisition Priority List, 3)
- Advocate against policies or development likely to significantly reduce green spaces (Executive Summary, 12)

ACTION STRATEGIES

The following action strategies are intended to assist the town staff and neighborhood residents in achievement of the goal of this chapter.

TOWN ACTION STRATEGIES

MAIN STREET DEVELOPMENT AND PEDESTRIAN LIFE

- Support plans to further develop pedestrian networks including proposed South Main Street landscaping and enhancements.
- Explore alternatives to the proposed Southgate-US460 interchange.
- Create pedestrian-friendly conditions on (1) South Main Street, south of Airport Road, and (2) Country Club Drive.
- Establish connections between the Miller-Southside and the Mountain View neighborhoods on the east side of Main Street. One approach to doing this would be to create better pedestrian access across South Main Street.
- Ensure that Main Street development is conducted under a single set of policies that extends to both the east and west sides of the street.
- Support the preservation of existing Main Street houses. The houses may be renovated for residential use or in some special situations be converted to small businesses that enhance the quality of life for adjacent residences. Business conversion involves providing adequate parking for customers and employees in ways that do not destroy the landscape, especially the backyards.
- Provide adequate sidewalks on important pedestrian thoroughways.
- Provide for traffic-calming on automobile thoroughways such as Airport Road, Draper Road, Southgate Road and Edgewood Lane.

HOUSING AND RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER

- Encourage rental property owners and tenants to maintain a high level of property maintenance to maintain or improve the neighborhood character.
- Protect the alleyways in the neighborhood from destruction.
- Establish a civic park buffer between downtown and Miller-Southside to encompass the Montgomery-Floyd library, Blacksburg police station and Municipal building.

STREET AND PUBLIC CHARACTER

- Advocate for green spaces and parkland. In order to discourage the number of auto-centered businesses from enlarging, bolster the street edges of undeveloped land with residences or pedestrian-centered businesses.
- Provide safe, functional and attractive entrances to the Huckleberry Trail and enhance existing greenways.
- Provide for new street lights in Miller-Southside neighborhood to be in scale to the pedestrian (see appendix).

NEIGHBORHOOD ACTION STRATEGIES

MAIN STREET DEVELOPMENT AND PEDESTRIAN LIFE

- Discourage strip malls, office parks and other auto-centered businesses from encroaching on vulnerable neighborhood edges.
- Encourage the redevelopment of parking-intensive businesses to use alternative pavement options and use effective screening to screen parking areas.
- Establish a dialog with businesses adjacent to the neighborhood.
- Advocate for appropriate use of the old Middle School on Eheart Street and South Main Street

HOUSING AND RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER

- Identify real estate agents that are sympathetic to the concerns of Miller-Southside and actively encourage residents to use their services.
- Oppose special permits on neighborhood roads other than Main Street. Maintain residential dominance in Miller-Southside.
- Advocate for Miller-Southside in the Town and County zoning and planning processes.
- Maintain pro-active and vigilant stance toward future development within and around the neighborhood.
- Develop an open communication with the New River Valley Realtors Association to market the neighborhood and encourage owner occupied housing rather than rental property.

STREET AND PUBLIC CHARACTER

- Establish a dialog with owners of undeveloped land in, and adjacent to, the neighborhood including existing homeowners, The Rugby Club, The German Club, the Virginia Tech Turfgrass Research Group and the strip development along Draper at Miller and Clay Streets.

CIVIC ACTIVITY AND ADVOCACY

- Develop a communication network to alert residents to applications for Special Use Permits.
- Open communication with civic and commercial neighbors to work together for maintenance of neighborhood character (Gables Shopping Center, Children's Nest, strip development across from library, Virginia Tech, Police, Library, Montgomery County and Blacksburg Planning Commission).
- Continue close contact with town staff to keep residents informed about relevant Town programs and progress regarding neighborhood concerns.
- Form action committees through the Miller-Southside Alliance to work on relevant issues such as future development, historical preservation, greenways, etc.
- Establish a dialog with Mountain View and other adjacent neighborhoods.

- Promote the continuous development and expansion of a common neighborhood organization, such as the Miller-Southside Alliance. Increase membership and neighborhood involvement.
- Identify block captains responsible for neighborhood group communications.
- Organize neighborhood-wide activities, such as yard sales, to create a sense of community and raise funds for a common neighborhood organization, such as the Miller-Southside Alliance.
- Expand the annual Draper-Preston party to the entire Miller-Southside neighborhood, perhaps rotating locations every year.
- Consider including a town-neighborhood outreach event (i.e. an annual gathering).
- Advocate for neighborhood concerns within Town and County government.

“Downtown Blacksburg is the heart of Town. It is the geographic and cultural center, and historic center of commerce and business. Downtown gives Blacksburg its identity as a college town. It reflects Blacksburg's past in its shops and houses and by establishing the cultural center of the community.”—Comprehensive Plan

GOAL

To promote the stability of the pedestrian-friendly residential culture of the neighborhood while supporting and advising Town administration on the integration of contiguous, compatible business development within and adjacent to the Miller-Southside neighborhood.

BACKGROUND

The Miller-Southside neighborhood is located between the pedestrian-friendly commercial zone of the historic downtown and the pedestrian-hostile commercial developments south of Airport Road. These two commercial sectors are connected by South Main Street, which comprises the neighborhood's western edge boundary. Several commercial offices occupy renovated former residences on Main Street.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Contiguous, sustainable growth of the town's commercial corridor, Main Street, can enhance the pedestrian experience and provide economic benefits to the town.
- New businesses in proximity to Miller-Southside can provide places for residents to dine, shop, and conduct business.

CHALLENGES

- Business development south of Country Club Drive is too distant from the town center to encourage pedestrian activity.
- Negative or pervasive encroachment of businesses on adjacent residential life is a possibility.
- Town Zoning regulations for property along S. Main St. are different for each side and may not be effective in creating a uniform streetscape.

GENERAL POLICIES

- Promote the design of businesses and infrastructure in line with established principals for pedestrian life: narrow streets relative to building heights, businesses oriented to the sidewalks, dense vehicular traffic, parking located behind businesses and relatively little by way of interchanges, expressways and overpasses in or near the commercial center, and housing above retail. The town should align new commercial development on Main Street with that which is already present in downtown (Comprehensive Plan, Community Design, 5 -8).
- Create opportunities for new retail space near downtown (Comprehensive Plan, Economic Development, 32).
- Town and neighborhood economic policy considers the *type* of jobs created by a proposal of growth (not simply the number of jobs.) Full-time jobs that do not offer healthcare and

retirement benefits drain community resources in the medium- and long-term. Jobs that pay hourly should offer a “living wage” sufficient to maintain the town’s existing standard of living. (Comprehensive Plan, Economic Development, 28)

ACTION STRATEGIES

The following action strategies are intended to assist the town staff and neighborhood residents in achievement of the goal of this chapter.

TOWN ACTION STRATEGIES

- Promote the use of existing renovated houses on Main Street for office use while maintaining the residential character.
- Promote family-owned, non-chain retail.
- Consider *both* sides of Main Street as a single entity, under a single set of goals irrespective of neighborhood boundaries.
- As businesses move south on Main Street, the tree plantings, sidewalk detailing, benches, and street lights that demark downtown should extend to the new edge of the commercial district.
- New commercial development adjacent to the Miller-Southside neighborhood should be designed with a parking-building-sidewalk composition in line with established town policy. *“The sizes of buildings fronting downtown streets are slightly taller than the streets are wide, thus creating an ‘urban’ atmosphere and the sense of hospitable outdoor rooms. Buildings situated on sidewalks with parking located in the rear further enhances this effect, as well as endorses the idea of a community that values people before automobiles. Town policy and practice encourages pedestrian-oriented design by requiring new commercial developments to locate parking behind the front building line, and also by eliminating front setbacks to place the structure closer to the street.”*

NEIGHBORHOOD ACTION STRATEGIES

- Pursue green buffer space at the intersection of Draper Road and Country Club Drive.
- Seek to change circulation pattern for Children’s Nest Daycare. Entrance should be via the commercial road between Plaza One and McCoy funeral home, rather than via the residential street, Draper Road.

GOAL

To perpetuate and enhance the authentic, original qualities of the neighborhood, particularly its spatial patterns as articulated by the critical elements of scale, density, lot coverage, and proportion as related to the tree-lined sidewalks, alleys, and streets.

BACKGROUND

The Miller-Southside Neighborhood was subdivided for residential use in the 1920's and developed continuously to the present day. Consequently, the styles of houses range greatly and include small brick ranches, large brick four squares, one and a half story bungalows, two story colonials, Dutch revivals, Cape Cods, craftsmen, and Tudor cottages. Contemporary residences have also been built. These structures carry forth the design diversity that is distinct to this neighborhood. Furthermore, within the Miller-Southside Neighborhood is the Draper-Preston Historic District that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Despite such a temporal and consequentially, stylistic diversity, the neighborhood maintains much effective continuity. This is achieved by respecting an overarching structure of organization, characterized by: building lots that are repetitive in size; typical, proportional lot coverage which does not exceed 45 percent; detached garages oriented toward the back of the lot lending primary significance to the house's street presence; regularly maintained setbacks to establish a consistent scale relative to the street; narrow driveways at the street which do not interfere with sidewalk and street continuity; and mature trees that canopy the sidewalks to contribute to the pedestrian experience. In addition, the majority of the houses are well constructed, capably detailed, and regularly maintained.

OPPORTUNITIES

- The neighborhood lies within walking distance to Blacksburg's civic, public, and commercial areas. The geographic location and neighborhood feel are often cited as the most preferred traits.
- The Miller-Southside neighborhood continues to be a very desirable place to live with a high percentage of owner occupied residences. These older homes are well constructed of high quality materials.
- Older homes reflect a different mode of living and many owners desire to modernize the existing infrastructure by adding more bathrooms, larger kitchens, master bedrooms, and two car garages. Such sustainable growth is important to prevent blight. Promoting innovative design that considerately interacts with traditional elements encourages sustainable growth.
- The alleyways are unique and are an important component of the spatial pattern of the neighborhood. They serve as a service road and an additional pedestrian and bicyclist path by which to traverse the neighborhood. Many garages are accessed via the alley, rather than from the street.
- The sidewalks contribute to the historic spatial conventions of the area, promote a positive pedestrian environment, and enhance safety.

- Most garages are detached, single-car shelters, shifted from the main building volume, often oriented to the back of the building lot. This organization results in clusters of individual structures in which the visual breaks between house volumes and garage volumes open up vistas. Narrow driveways at the street maintain sidewalk continuity. These details support a pleasant walking experience and maintain a healthy balance between buildings, cars, and pedestrians.
- Mature deciduous trees line the sidewalks and streets contributing in a positive way to the spatial structure of the neighborhood. The extant trees establish an aesthetic precedent by which to encourage future tree planting and tree replacement with large-scale trees along the street.
- There are still a handful of open lots. These hold potential for both development and park space.
- There is significant authentic stylistic diversity in the house forms, as noted in the background section.
- Within the Miller-Southside Neighborhood, the Draper-Preston area has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Locally, there is an opportunity to designate this area as a Historic or Design Review Overlay District in order to offer protection from some of the aforementioned challenges threatening the neighborhood as a whole. Design review could include provisions such as building materials, orientation, massing, volume, scale, style, continuity of facades, or any other criteria necessary to conserve features deemed significant to the historic status. An excerpt from the existing downtown Blacksburg Historic District Design Guidelines brochure provides an example of a reasonable starting point: *“Changes to historic materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships need to retain a sense of wholeness of the district. In the presence of ongoing change, the distinction of the historic setting, including topography, vegetation, the original town grid and buildings, sustains the memory of an area through time.”*

CHALLENGES

Encroachment from adjacent civic, community, professional, and commercial enterprises has resulted in the conversions of single-family houses for other functions. The houses along Main Street are now almost exclusively professional offices and several houses adjacent to the University have been razed. Professional and commercial conversion is often irreversible. Additional problems associated with encroachment include increased parking volume and increased traffic. Encroachment is an ongoing threat at the boundary properties of this residential neighborhood.

- Older homes need maintenance and repair. There are no guarantees of high quality interventions over quick fixes and choices in refurbishing or replacing certain materials or elements impacts the original historic context. Further, there are no means by which to ensure that changes will not dramatically alter the scale or character of an existing house, particularly as it relates to the neighborhood’s street presence.
- Several recent renovation projects prompt four major concerns regarding such activity. First, additions of poor quality and lacking detailing—typically manifested as a box-like volume appended to a house, extended to the set-back line, clad in vinyl siding, and devoid of windows. Second, overbuilding the site, which often undermines the historic spatial relationship established between building mass and street. Relative scale is exceptionally important to conserve. Pop-ups and other additions that more than double existing square footage may meet town code yet fracture the established proportional lot coverage. Third, the concealment of the original, authentic building under heavy-handed intervention—houses are obscured by transformations that vary from stylistic

modifications to total volumetric transformations. Fourth, the total demolition of houses to accommodate new, colossal constructions threatens to endanger the historic streetscape.

- The alleys are neglected and overgrown; there seems to be no regular maintenance. The gravel roadway is uneven from regular use by heavy garbage trucks. Many garbage cans remain in the alley throughout the week.
- The network of sidewalks is not evenly distributed through the Miller-Southside district. Heavy vehicular and pedestrian traffic and the proximity of the Beeks Elementary School suggest roads in immediate need of such supplemental infrastructure: Country Club, Airport, Southgate, and Draper extension. Existing sidewalks are also in need of repair and maintenance.
- Many houses without garages have small lots. Variances to back- and side-yard setbacks may be required in order to accommodate new garages or accessory structures that blend in with the overall historic and residential character of the neighborhood.
- Deciduous, slow-growth trees are not being replaced in kind. Maintaining the integrity of the mature landscaping requires individual, voluntary compliance. Success is only likely through a very persistent educational campaign.
- Any open space in an older neighborhood is highly valued and highly valuable. Many residents advocate developing empty lots as mini-parks or gardens, yet the commercial value of the land is a real impediment.
- Residents are concerned about subdivision-within-a-subdivision, type development that may occur. These types of subdivisions may create houses that are significantly out-of-scale relative to their lot size and to the Miller-Southside neighborhood. Residents seek to have earlier input on any future developments with an eye toward promoting sustainable growth that is guided by existing spatial patterns and layout.
- The Miller-Southside neighborhood has historic value more for the range of stylistic types rather than having significant contributing structures that are individually laudable as architectural, historical, archaeological, or cultural models.
- In the 1980's, the Draper-Preston area voted against an Historic District designation. A majority of the homeowners feared that preservation guidelines would be too restrictive in myriad ways. In light of recent building activity, some residents are again calling for designation. The question remains: which historic elements of the district should the neighborhood actively seek to conserve and via what system of oversight?

GENERAL POLICIES

- To conserve the historic neighborhood fabric while sustaining necessary alterations, renovations, and additions. The aggregate of structures indicate loose historic patterns that should serve as a guide for future actions throughout the whole Miller-Southside neighborhood.

ACTION STRATEGIES

The following action strategies are intended to assist the town staff and neighborhood residents in achievement of the goal of this chapter.

Town Action Strategies

- Improve and increase the regular maintenance for alleyways and sidewalks.

Neighborhood Action Strategies

- The residents have clearly stated the desire to work with the town and developers on the planning stages of future development both in and adjacent to the neighborhood. Seek to establish a permanent neighborhood committee that can act as a standing professional advisory board and work to establish written guidelines oriented toward allowable usages or designs.
- Work on preliminary groundwork for designation of Historic District overlay: acquire signatures on petition of 51% of real property owners within the proposed district and provide to the Zoning Administrator for town consideration. Implicit with gathering the petition is ascertaining if a majority of the proposed district wish to pursue the overlay.
- The alleyways and walkways are parts of the neighborhood that neighbors wish to revive and renew. The neighborhood should work with the town to correct and prevent the problems the large trucks are causing to the roadbed and landscaping. Work with town grants to install sidewalks.
- Investigate design of garbage can shelters intermittently placed along the alleys. This may be financed via matching grants.
- Generate a pamphlet to guide property owners in developing sensitive design approaches that respect the built patterns of the district. Promote well-detailed additions, not necessarily similarly detailed but thoughtful and of high quality. Stress the neighborhood spatial patterns and suggest modern means by which to parallel them. There are many design “tricks” to lighten the effect of larger size additions; they should be employed.
- Continue neighborhood picnics to keep dialogue open between homeowners.

CHAPTER 6: NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND OPEN SPACE, GREENWAYS, PARKS AND RECREATION

GOAL

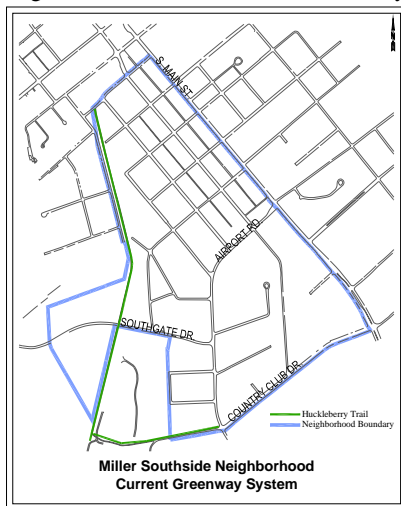
To maintain and enhance the existing, cultivated natural setting of this neighborhood and to develop a broader palette and scale of park environments and landscape features.

BACKGROUND

Description

Chief among the unique characteristics of this neighborhood is its cultivated natural beauty. The sidewalks and roadways are articulated and bound by grand scale canopies of trees. This intimate, space-defining attribute is what largely differentiates the Miller-Southside neighborhood from the newer subdivisions.

This long-established, residential neighborhood is surrounded by the public realms of Blacksburg, specifically the Virginia Tech campus, a collective of civic buildings: the public library, police station, and municipal building, Beeks Elementary School, Gables Shopping Center, and Main Street. Consequent to the neighborhood's urban proximity and controlled natural setting, the Miller-Southside neighborhood attracts significant pedestrian traffic. Further, the Huckleberry Trail that adjoins the neighborhood to the west draws walkers, runners, and bicyclists from across the town. There are five primary access nodes to the trail: 1.) Miller Street, 2.) Eheart Street, 3.) Allendale Court, 4.) South Gate Drive, and 5.) Country Club Drive. Aside from this greenway trail, there is no dedicated expanse of parkland in the Miller-Southside neighborhood or in its immediate vicinity.



OPPORTUNITIES

Existing, yet compromised, street tree canopies establish an aesthetic precedent by which to encourage future tree planting and tree replacement with large-scale, slow growth trees along the street.

Enhance the pedestrian experience, not only during the day, but also at night. Extend sidewalks to more streets throughout the neighborhood to create a network. Additionally, lower light levels can slow down cars making it safer to walk in the evening.

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The refinement of our alleyways could provide not only a safe pedestrian experience, but another unique mode to traverse the neighborhood. This might entail keeping foliage trimmed, filling holes and smoothing ruts in the roadway, or even articulating a designated path. The town currently proposes a spur extension along the alley between Draper and Main streets.

Rather than being merely utilitarian access points, the five intersecting nodes the neighborhood shares with the Huckleberry Trail have the potential to be distinctive places for the neighborhood and its visitors. Some of these sites are large enough to become mini-parks.

The proximity to the Huckleberry Trail encourages the establishment and development of intersecting Greenway trails and adjacent Parks. Multi-scaled, communal infrastructures could address such varied ends as small gatherings, free play, organized sport, open space, individual contemplation, connecting pathways, and horticultural exhibition.

The “Rugby Field,” located between Gables Shopping Center and Beeks Elementary, adjoins the southern-most edge of the Miller-Southside neighborhood and comprises a large tract, almost 15 acres, of undeveloped green space. Currently, this green space is used recreationally as a rugby field, but continued recreational use is threatened by commercial encroachment. Indeed, the 2046 Blacksburg Comprehensive Master Plan proposes a park for this general area. (Figure PR-13 & 14). A future park should be designed to complement and extend the existing Margaret Beeks Elementary School property. The use of the park should be consistent with the Parks and Recreation Vision Plan. This property also offers a useful green buffer from the strip development along South Main Street for the neighborhood.

Beeks Elementary School currently houses a playground, a “tot lot.”

Existing vacant lots in the neighborhood could be developed into “pocket” parks to provide small-scale public green spaces or play areas.

CHALLENGES

Trees are challenging, as their ultimate demise is precipitated by a variety of factors, such as old age, catastrophic weather, the inexperienced owner-landscaper, and even the pruning shears of utility companies. Ultimately, maintaining the integrity of the mature landscaping requires individual, voluntary compliance. Success is only likely through a very persistent educational campaign.

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Maintaining and establishing large growth trees is compromised by above grade utility lines. The town’s current program promoting below grade utility lines would allow for healthy growth of large-scale trees and also protect the neighborhood from power outages due to storms.

Many of the residential structures were designed to accommodate one vehicle per house. Although this was an acceptable design standard in the 1930’s, it has created a parking shortage for neighborhood residents. Many households park their vehicles on the street.

The auction in December 2003 of 31 acres along the western side of South Main Street presents ongoing dilemmas for the adjacent neighborhoods which support both natural, pedestrian-friendly environments but also Blacksburg’s growing infrastructure. Of concern by the abutting neighborhoods is traffic, loss of green space, loss of property value for immediately adjacent homes, undermining the historic commercial downtown, dramatic increase in building scale and density, security of young school children, negative impact on existing woodland and wetlands, and loss of the natural dynamic sloping terrain.

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The large 14.8-acre tract, known as Rugby field, a portion of the former Eakin Farm, is undoubtedly very valuable. Purchasing property for parks, regardless of size, may be prohibitively expensive.

Another possible inroad for commercial development in the neighborhood is posed by the land comprising the Beeks Elementary School that is owned by the Montgomery County School Board. The board has closed the former Blacksburg Middle School and there are no guarantees that the land comprising Beeks Elementary, of approximately 20 acres, will always maintain its present, civic purpose. Should Beeks Elementary be closed in the future, commercial forces could further encroach from the Main Street business zone, cutting into the neighborhood. Zoning changes in adjacent properties make this possibility a more likely scenario.

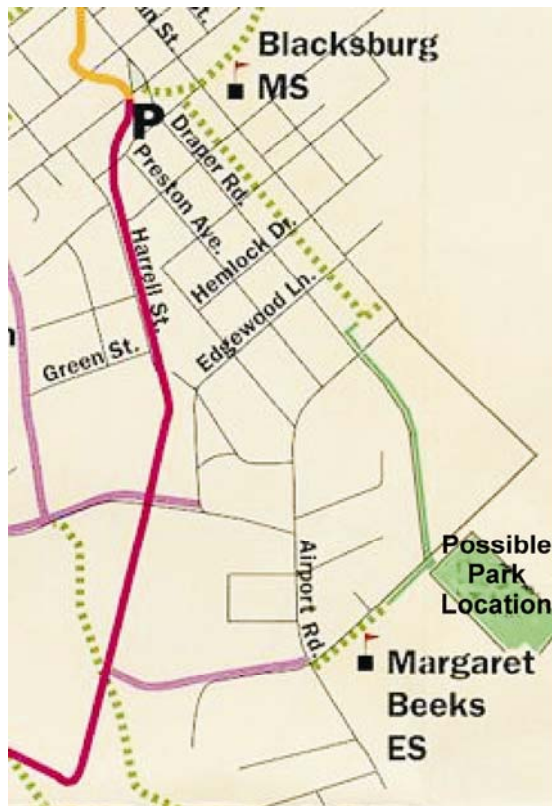
ACTION STRATEGIES

The following action strategies are intended to assist the town staff and neighborhood residents in achievement of the goal of this chapter.

Town Action Strategies

Extend the proposed spur extension (Greenways map, July 2000) from the Huckleberry's Country Club node past its Airport Road termination to a new Draper Road termination point. Concurrently, continue the proposed trail running along the alleyway between South Main Street and Draper Road down the east side of Draper Road from Airport to Country Club. Develop the alleyway trail transition via a bend onto Draper Road in addition to that onto Main Street. These two trail extensions would intersect at the proposed Community Park (20 acres minimum) or Neighborhood Park (5 acres minimum).

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Install a sidewalk along the eastern edge of Draper Road from Airport to Country Club.

Bury utility cables as upgrades become necessary.

Replace industrial street lighting with more intimate lighting: closer to ground, less lumens. Support this effort through the Neighborhood Enhancement Grant Program in conjunction with the Town Cost Share Program.

Install sidewalks on both sides of Airport Road and on one side of Draper extension and Country Club Road. Perhaps utilizing the Neighborhood Enhancement Grant Program in conjunction with the Town Cost Share Program.

Allow some flexibility in Town Codes to allow homeowners to build modest carports or garages.

Encourage the development of a pedestrian friendly commercial development along S. Main Street that includes an appropriate amount of recreation to serve the surrounding neighborhoods.

The development of a park on the Rugby Field would create a destination or a hub for the proposed Huckleberry Trail extensions running along Country Club and Draper roads.

Neighborhood Action Strategies

The neighborhood should sponsor designs for mini parks along the 5 access points to the Huckleberry trail.

The neighborhood should seek conservation easements and/or joint-use agreements for the current Rugby field, a portion of the former Eakin Farm.

The adjacent neighborhoods, Miller-Southside and Airport Acres, should pursue the necessary means to participate in any future development of the Rugby Field and South Main Street redevelopment to facilitate development design that compliments the residential area.

Use the Neighborhood Enhancement Grant Program to fund the design and landscaping of the five intersecting nodes the neighborhood shares with the Huckleberry Trail.

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Investigate the feasibility of purchasing or acquiring use of extant, vacant lots throughout the neighborhood for development into community mini-parks and gardens. Approach owners of such property with proposals of “right of first refusal” or establishments of conservation easements.

Work with Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee and the Director of Parks and Recreations to advance the creation of a park on the Rugby Field property. Consequently, pursue the creation of a joint-use agreement with the Montgomery County School Board for the development of a park master plan that incorporates the adjoining Beeks Elementary School grounds. Minimally, work to prevent Main Street commercial development from “growing” into the neighborhood via the Eakin Farm property.

Establish a tree-planting program. Inform and encourage tree planting and tree replacement with large, slow growth trees along the street to reinforce and promote the extant yet compromised allées of trees. Create a neighborhood group tree-planting day. Distribute a pamphlet, perhaps financed by the Miller-Southside Alliance, detailing the ecologic history of the neighborhood and promoting planting recommendations to help maintain our cultivated natural heritage.

Replace industrial street lighting with more intimate lighting: closer to ground, less lumens. Pursue Neighborhood Grants for financial support.

Bury utility cables as upgrades become necessary.

Work to deter the “suburbanization” of the neighborhood. Discourage: excess, unnecessary signage; ornate, out-of-scale “fences;” large, formal expanses of manicured grass; super-sized renovations and additions.

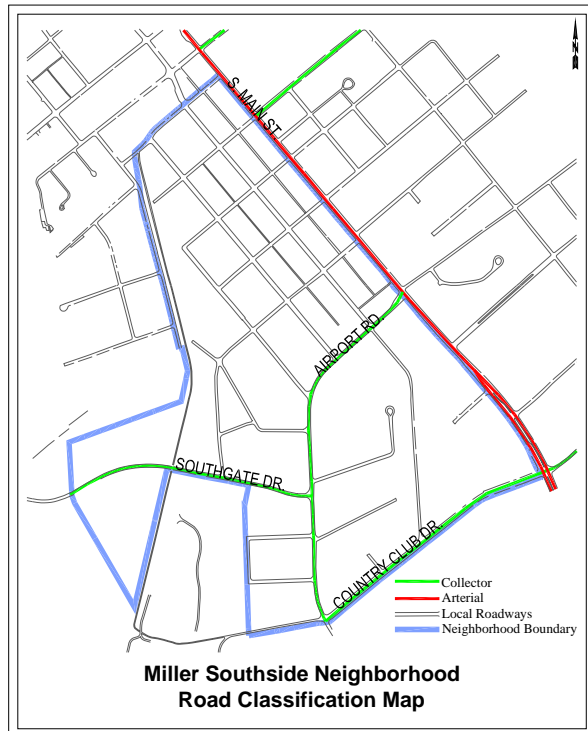
Limit the site of the proposed South Main commercial development. Acquire the Rugby Field property, formerly the Eakin Farm, located between Beeks Elementary and Gables Shopping Center. Define this property as a Community Park or Neighborhood Park to address the standing need for athletic grounds on the south side of town and a buffer to commercial growth. Plant trees on the eastern most edge to shield neighborhood and park from the back, service elevation of Gables Shopping Center.

GOAL

To establish the principles that should guide decisions regarding the various modes of transportation throughout the neighborhood and adjoining streets in order to promote a pleasant, pedestrian-oriented and safe environment for all.

BACKGROUND

This chapter addresses existing conditions pertaining to the various modes of transportation within and immediately surrounding the Miller Southside neighborhood. These include the street network and sidewalks, bike paths, vehicular traffic patterns, and bus transit access. The following map identifies the existing streets and their classification in relation to the Town's thoroughfares.



The framework established by its streets supports a network of public and private open spaces and pedestrian paths as well as the transportation needs of its land uses. This organization of about twenty streets includes two collectors -- Airport Road and Country Club Drive -- that intersect Main Street (an arterial road) and one collector -- Southgate Drive -- that connects to Route 460 (a federal highway). The quality of the streets vary: some are urban in character with hedges, concrete sidewalks and on-street parking permitted on each side while others are without sidewalks and narrower. The Huckleberry Trail runs along the southwest border of the neighborhood and provides an asphalt path for walkers, joggers and cyclists. On its northeastern border, Blacksburg Transit provides bus service along South Main Street with several stops between Miller Street and Country Club Drive.

For many decades the Miller-Southside neighborhood has been characterized as a safe place to live with a lush landscape that contributes to a pedestrian-friendly setting. Throughout the day numerous town residents take a stroll, walk their dogs, ride bikes or jog through the tree-lined neighborhood streets. Some children walk to and from nearby schools. During lunchtime, other citizens walk in groups along its shaded sidewalks. Thus, the neighborhood residents have an interest in enhancing the beauty and safety of its streets.

In 2000, the residents took advantage of the town's neighborhood grant program that resulted in small landscaped islands at four locations – Airport at Draper Road and Preston Avenue and Miller Street at Draper Road and Preston Avenue. The intended goal has yet to be entirely achieved: plans for signage and other improvements are underway.

Up until about 1996, there has been a perceived balance between the presence of cars and people. In 2000 the Town created the Neighborhood Traffic Control Program. Thus, during 2002 and 2003 many residents participated in town-sponsored public meetings to mitigate the undesirable nuisances and safety issues related to an increase in vehicular traffic activity. Throughout these meetings residents repeatedly stated that they wish to encourage and maintain a pedestrian-friendly and safe place to live. Residents feel it is important to have foresight on these matters rather than wait to react.

OPPORTUNITIES and CHALLENGES

STREETS AND TRAFFIC CALMING

Opportunities

- There are multiple convenient ways to get to and through the Miller-Southside neighborhood which is predominately low density single-family residential. Modes of transportation include car, bus, bicycle, and walking. Pedestrian and bike travel in this neighborhood is frequent. The provision of safer streets will enhance these modes of travel and encourage the usage of more non-vehicular modes of transportation.
- The neighborhood meetings throughout 2002 and 2003 addressed traffic issues as well as increased communication and understanding of the interrelated issues among residents and small business owners. Overwhelmingly, residents are committed to address the safety issues with traffic calming measures. The provision of landscaped elements such as circles, chokers, diverters, etc. has been shown to calm traffic and increase the quality of the neighborhood and safety of all.
- There are very defined entry points into the neighborhood that could be physically enhanced as 'gateways' similar to the landscaped islands installed at the intersections of Draper Road and Preston Avenue with Airport Road as well as Miller Street. These serve as traffic calming features and enhance the lush landscape, environmental quality and safety of walkers.
- Alleys running north-south and mid-block between Main Street, Draper Road and Preston Avenue are a unique feature of the neighborhood. These narrow and lush landscaped roadways provide access to some residents' garages, pick-up for trash service as well as an alternative walking path. Alleys also serve as a buffer between the homes on Draper Road and the businesses on Main Street.

Challenges

- There is an increase in number of vehicles that traverse the Miller-Southside neighborhood due to an overall rise in vehicles resulting from the prosperity of the town and university. Several

streets have become cut-through routes. For some drivers, it is a quick cut-through route to the university; for others, it is a speedy way to get around downtown to other neighborhoods. Cut through and swift traffic jeopardize the safety of all and quality of life for residents.

- Although factual data recorded in 2002 suggest that the volume and speed of vehicles meets the norm accepted for traffic engineers, residents have witnessed incidents that propose otherwise. Progressively more often, residents encounter cars failing to stop at stop signs, and drivers exceeding the speed limit between stop signs. Traffic calming measures are necessary to ensure safety of all as well as maintain enjoyable environment for walkers, cyclists and joggers.
- In public meetings residents identified Airport Road, Southgate Drive and Draper Road as thoroughfares that urgently need traffic calming measures with Edgewood Lane and Preston Avenue of increasing concern. It was acknowledged that it is difficult to traverse Main Street on foot.

HUCKLEBERRY TRAIL

Opportunities

- Huckleberry Trail is used extensively as an alternative mode of transportation as well as place of recreation.

Challenges

- To maintain a safe and clean environment along the Huckleberry Trail through use of proper etiquette by the diversity of its users.

PARKING

Opportunities

- Most of the houses have long driveways that access garages in the rear of the property. This provides for multiple car off-street parking.

Challenges

- On-street parking is permitted throughout the neighborhood however; destinations such as the Library, Huckleberry Trail and businesses along Main Street have created a need for more parking. While there are off-street parking lots, the streets near these destinations have seen an increase of overflow parking. Many residents are finding it difficult or impossible to park in front of their own homes. This parking issue may need to be resolved with the use of 2-hour parking signs, parking permits requirements, or further parking provided downtown.

GENERAL POLICIES

This Miller-Southside Neighborhood Plan has been written to be coherent with the Town of Blacksburg's Comprehensive Plan. The following general policies of that plan are particularly relevant to the content of this chapter.

- "Create a network of sidewalks that serves the entire community and provides for safe pedestrian access to all potential destinations in Town including public schools, downtown, Virginia Tech, community facilities, major shopping areas, and residential areas. Allow a variety of sidewalk sizes and materials as appropriate to setting and use." [Transportation, p. 41]
- Prohibit commercial or heavy thru-trucks on Draper Road and Preston Avenue.

ACTION STRATEGIES

The following action strategies are intended to assist the town staff and neighborhood residents in achievement of the goal of this chapter.

TOWN ACTION STRATEGIES

- The Town staff will continue to work with residents and businesses to address the concerns regarding increasing traffic safety issues outlined in this Miller-Southside Neighborhood Plan.
- The Town staff will maintain and enhance the communication among residents and businesses in the Miller-Southside neighborhood in order to achieve the objectives of the Neighborhood Traffic Control Program [NTCP].
- Policies and initiatives should reflect a desire to promote walkable neighborhoods.

NEIGHBORHOOD ACTION STRATEGIES

- Residents will collect and document unsafe situations observed by residents.
- Residents will continue to work with Town staff as prescribed in the NTCP process to devise a set of traffic calming measures for the entire neighborhood.

GOAL

To ensure the safety of neighborhood residents and their homes as well as children playing and people walking, bicycling, and jogging through the neighborhood.

BACKGROUND

The Miller-Southside neighborhood is known as a safe place to live. Children play in the yards, people stroll along the sidewalks, and resident's properties are generally crime-free. The area is generally well lit from street lighting, patrolled regularly by the police and is has well-maintained roads by the Town. The residents are comfortable claiming the first mile of the Huckleberry Trail as integral to the neighborhood but this also diversifies the public safety concerns. Although there are no immediate threats to the neighborhood there are however, challenges that need continual monitoring.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**LIGHTING****Opportunities**

- Streetlights currently are high-pressure sodium lamps in fixtures typically used on major roadways. A citizens group could study alternative designs that would be compatible with the Town's overall public safety concerns and enhance the residential quality of the neighborhood. For information on lighting options, see appendix on lighting.
- Provision of streetlights at the intersections and key crossings of the Huckleberry Trail.

Challenges

- The quality of light from streetlights could be improved, while still controlling light pollution into resident's homes.
- Huckleberry Trail crossings at Miller Street, and stairs at Southgate Drive need to be further illuminated.

PUBLIC NUISANCE**Opportunities**

- Reduce the noise nuisances by increasing police patrols on football weekend nights and select holidays such as July 4th.

GENERAL POLICIES

This Miller-Southside Neighborhood Plan has been written to be coherent with the Town of Blacksburg's Comprehensive Plan. The following general policies of that plan are particularly relevant to the content of this chapter.

"Midtown South is a place where it's easy and safe for pedestrians and bicyclists to get around Town"—Comprehensive Plan

The neighborhood remains essentially crime-free and safe with the assistance of the Blacksburg Police Department through surveillance, and enforcement of applicable laws and ordinances.

The Miller-Southside Alliance is committed to the safety of its residents and wishes to be kept appraised and engaged in decision making, of any changes to the public safety issues affecting its neighborhood. This includes changes to traffic patterns, traffic calming techniques, street lighting, noise ordinances and other issues mentioned or not mentioned that affect public safety in this neighborhood.

ACTION STRATEGIES

The following action strategies are intended to assist the town staff and neighborhood residents in achievement of the goal of this chapter.

Town Action Strategies

- Maintain level sidewalks through repair as needed due to tree root upheaval.
- Provide a sidewalk along the east side of Draper Road between Airport and Country Club that is adjacent to the trail extension that is proposed in Chapter 6.
- Provide a sidewalk along the north side of Miller Street adjacent to the library from Draper Road to Preston Avenue.
- Provide for safer crossings along Airport Road at Preston Avenue, Southgate Drive, and Country Club Drive.
- Provide for safer crossings along Main Street at Clay Street, Eakin Street, Eheart Street, Edgewood Lane.
- Provide for safer passage of bicyclists, walkers, and joggers along the south side of Southgate Drive under the Huckleberry Trail overpass.
- Provide a streetlight and other motorist alert signs, etc for safer crossing at Miller Street at the Huckleberry Trail.
- Provide a Neighborhood Traffic Control Plan for the Miller-Southside neighborhood and the sub-areas within the neighborhood.
- Provide greater neighborhood police surveillance during football weekend nights and on special holidays such as July 4th.

Neighborhood Action Strategies

- Organize a citizens group to study street lighting issues and designs. This group could consult experts in public safety, lighting design and manufacturers.
- Review existing Town Ordinances pertaining primarily to noise, and see if they need amending or reinforcing with Town officials.

GOAL

Provide high quality utilities and services for all neighborhood residents in a manner that advances sustainable practices and technology.

BACKGROUND

Generally, the Town of Blacksburg provides adequate utilities and services to Miller-Southside.

While water supply is sufficient in Miller-Southside, sanitary sewer lines are sometimes not able to handle the loads placed on them. This is not because they are undersized, but rather because many older homes have sump pumps in their basements that drain directly to the sanitary sewer. Current building codes prohibit sump pump and roof gutters from discharging into sewers, but many of the homes in Miller-Southside were built before those codes went into effect and have not updated their systems to meet the new codes. This presents a two-fold problem: sewers that would otherwise be adequate strain to handle the loads and rain that is fed into sanitary sewer lines deprives the region of groundwater recharge.

The design of street lighting impacts not only the nighttime light levels in Miller-Southside but also defines the street life in the neighborhood. Many of our streets' lamps sit thirty feet in the air—a height appropriate for highway lighting but inappropriate for those not in automobiles. This is not in keeping with the neighborhood's primary goal to maintain and enhance pedestrian life.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Pervious surfaces such as vegetation, gravel, and porous pavers can allow for groundwater recharge.
- To relieve sanitary sewer pressures, sump pumps and downspouts can be diverted to local discharge locations such as vegetated filter strips, French drains and dry wells.
- The Town of Blacksburg and Virginia Tech Electric are working to identify a collection of streetlamps appropriate for neighborhood use.
- Recycling, even if not profitable, may provide a direct benefit by diverting waste from local landfills.

Challenges

- Impervious surfaces promote erosion and pollution and deprive our region of groundwater recharge
- The funneling of sump pump and downspout water into sanitary sewers can cause sewers to back up into basements and deprives our region of groundwater recharge
- The existing street lamps are too high to promote pedestrian street life.

GENERAL POLICIES

The Natural Environment and Open Space chapter of the Town's Comprehensive Plan states that the Town will "implement alternative ways to minimize impervious surfaces through cluster developments and urban landscaping. In addition, [they will] consider use of porous pavements where appropriate in new construction and in renovation of existing parking lots and streets throughout Blacksburg." (pg. 26)

"Encourage energy efficiency throughout the community." (pg. 22)

Develop street lighting standards/guidelines appropriate to the character and needs of varying areas of Town. (pg. 25)

ACTION STRATEGIES

The following action strategies are intended to assist the town staff and neighborhood residents in achievement of the goal of this chapter.

TOWN ACTION STRATEGIES

- Provide high quality removal of refuse through periodic review of contract terms with the Town and assessment of service by residents. Examine expanding the breadth of items that are recycled.
- Provide high quality storm water management following significant rainfall to abate standing water.
- Investigate the capacity of the storm water run-off drain at the south end of Draper Road near Airport Road.
- Offer specific instructions to residents wishing to recharge ground water and relieve sewer volumes.
- Continue to bury the electrical lines in compliance with current Town policies.

NEIGHBORHOOD ACTION STRATEGIES

- Promote a local discharge strategy for storm water. Work with town to reduce inflow and infiltration into town sanitary sewer lines.
- Minimize impervious lot coverage to assist in storm water run-off.
- Redirect sump pumps and downspouts to capture storm water on-site.
- Work with the Town to select appropriately-scaled street lights
- Continue to bury the electrical lines connecting from houses to public utility lines in compliance with current Town policies.
- Support future efforts of property owners to produce energy on-site (Photovoltaics, wind turbines, etc.)

Light Types

Incandescent

Incandescent lamps are among the first and least efficient light sources used in street lighting. Incandescent lighting was a popular option for street lighting until the 1950s, when other lamps proved to be more efficient and lower maintenance.

Fluorescent

Fluorescent lamps gained popularity for street lighting applications in the 1950s. The lamps were more efficient than their Incandescent counterparts, and required less maintenance. The lamps were primarily used in downtown areas and parking lots. They were good for any place requiring a lot of light over a large area. The popularity of these lamps was relatively short-lived, as more efficient, compact and lower-maintenance High Intensity Discharge lamp technology was advanced.

Low Pressure Sodium

Low Pressure Sodium (LPS) lamp is by far the most efficient light source used in street lighting. LPS lamps are used in various parts of the country, including San Diego, CA. The lamps produce a monochromatic orange-yellow light, from lamps which are long and skinny. LPS is also a good way to reduce sky glow for stargazers. The light is easily filtered out for viewing the stars through telescopes. Drawbacks of using LPS lamps include the color rendering. When the lamp is on, everything around it looks either orange-yellow, black or shades in between. Also, as the lamp ages, it uses more wattage, which lighting designers need to account for.

Mercury Vapor

Mercury Vapor was the first widely accepted HID (High Intensity Discharge) lighting source. Clear mercury vapor lamps cast a blue-green light, which some say makes people look like "walking cadavers." Advances in technology have lead to color corrected mercury vapor lamps, which cast a relatively clean white light. Coating the outer glass globe of the lamp with phosphors does this.

By the late 1950s, mercury lamps were very widely used around the US. The lamps were about as efficient as fluorescents; the fixtures were smaller, and lasted much longer. The lamps could also operate in extreme cold. One main difficulty with mercury lamps was "lumen depreciation." Lumen depreciation is a drop in light output of the lamp over time. In a lot of cases, a mercury lamp will burn for years past it's rated life, but it will burn much dimmer while using the same amount of wattage.

Metal Halide


Metal Halide Lamps are a distant cousin of mercury lights. The basic lamp is the same as a mercury lamp, but with other metallic elements added. The result is a good quality white light. Metal Halide has not gained wide acceptance as a source of streetlight. It is mostly found in

parking lots and inside commercial and industrial buildings. The light is more efficient than mercury vapor, but the lamp life is shorter. Another problem incurred with metal halide is "color shift." The color of the light produced by each lamp varies slightly, which leads to a cluttered effect. There are now lamps on the market that keep color shift to a minimum, helping to alleviate that problem. Of course, since the Metal Halide lamps are related to mercury, they too suffer from lumen depreciation, but not as extreme as MV.


High Pressure Sodium

High Pressure Sodium (HPS) lamps are now commonly used around the US in streetlights. The lamps were developed in the early 1970s and are more energy efficient than mercury and metal halide lamps. The lamps give off an amber color, have virtually no problem with color shift, and last for long periods of time. The lamps begin to incur problems when they near the end of their life. Lumen depreciation is a problem with HPS, though still not as severe as the depreciation seen with Mercury. The lamps begin to "cycle," which means they turn themselves off and come back on a minute later. This problem has been addressed with the recent introduction of non-cycling HPS lamps. This is what the Blacksburg currently uses through out most of the Town.


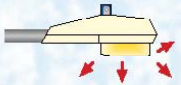
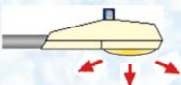
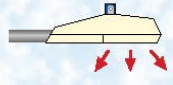
Streetlight Optic Design



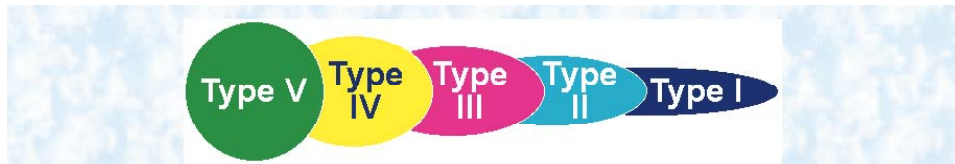
Optics for Streetlights



Most streetlights are designed to control light distribution. There are three types of optical systems that provide different degrees of control. These include the following: Non-cutoff, semi-cutoff and full-cutoff.

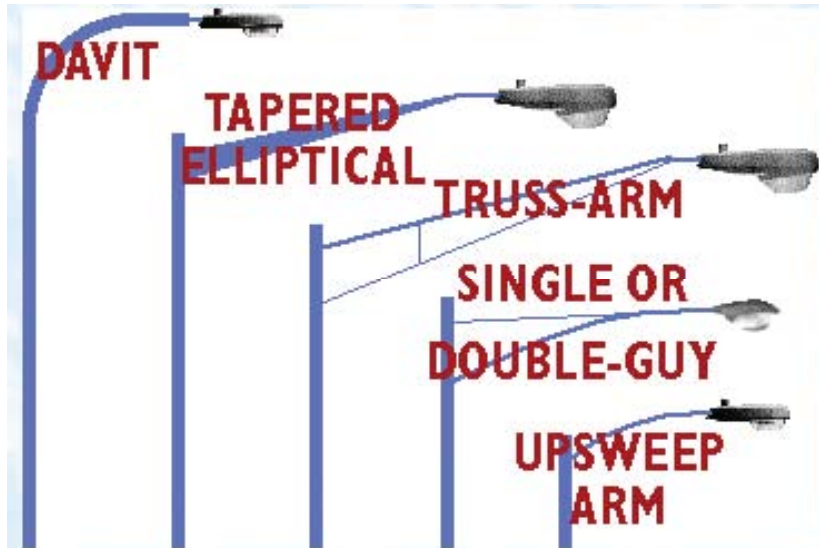
	<p>Non-cutoff optics, allow light to be emitted in all directions. Many decorative fixtures use non-cutoff fixtures. Non-cutoff optics are the least efficient way to put light on the ground. They are generally effective at throwing light up into trees, and create a large amount of light pollution and glare. These lights are not generally used as principal light sources on thoroughfares, as the glare has the tendency to blind drivers.</p>
	<p>Semi-cutoff optics, allow most of the light to be emitted below 90 degrees, but some light (up to 5%) to be emitted above 90 degrees. These types of optics are commonly used in cobra-head style streetlighting. They are quite effective at diffusing the light over a large, directed area on the ground. These lights still contribute some direct uplight, although not as much as non-cutoff lights. There is still significant glare from these fixtures, but often, they are mounted on taller poles, which remove them from the driver's field of vision.</p>
	<p>Cutoff optics have more controlled lighting than semi-cutoff. Less than 2.5% of the light is allowed to escape the fixture above 90 degrees. Cutoff optics are now common in parking lot applications where greater pole spacing is desired. They offer a wider spread of light than a full-cutoff, yet they generally cannot be spaced as far apart as semi-cutoff fixtures. These lights allow a small amount of direct uplight to escape above the fixture.</p>
	<p>Full-cutoff optics put light on the ground below the fixture only. Full-cutoff optics do not emit light above 90 degrees. Cutoff optics are gaining popularity around the USA, to the delight of astronomers. These optics direct light to the ground in a defined, tight pattern. Typically to achieve a uniform lighting job, one would have to use more full-cutoff luminaires or increase the mounting height of those luminaires to achieve the same result as compared with semi-cutoff or cutoff fixtures.</p>

There are five different distribution patterns for streetlights, developed by the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IESNA) and the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). These determine how far light goes across the street, and how far up and down the street light goes. Type V is essentially circular. It is most commonly found with non-cutoff luminaires, whereas type I is more likely to be used with semi-cutoff or cutoff fixtures. Type III is one of the most commonly available in most fixture types.



<http://www.eskimo.com/~jrterry/lamps.html>

Types of Poles



There are millions of streetlight poles out there, and dozens of manufacturers. Here are 5 of what seems to be the most common. These designs can still be found in most every place in the United States. These poles are primarily meant for cobra-head luminaires. Each one of these poles (with the exception of the davit pole) has a counterpart with similar design that attaches to wooden poles. An unsupported upsweep arm on a wooden pole is also known as a cantilever.



Typical Post Top Luminaire



Typical VT and Blacksburg Acorn type Post Top fixture

Post top fixtures are generally non-directional in their light projection. These create the greatest light pollution because of their lack of controls. When combined with poor quality HPS lamps, they can have an industrial or prison yard lighting effect. Snow looks orange and seeing the night sky is very difficult. They are popular because they seem to elicit a nostalgia effect for 19th century gas lamps.

Important considerations for Miller-Southside

This is almost exclusively residential. Light ‘spillage’ into home windows is a primary concern.

Light color tone is important. The 'whiter' the light quality the better. A lamp that tends to the blue spectrum is easier on natural colors than one tending to the orange spectrum.

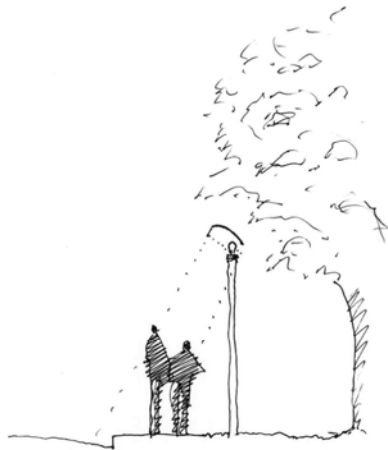
Energy efficiency and lamp efficacy are important, but may not preclude the previous two considerations.

The housing stock is variable in design. The street light design does not need to be artificially 'historic' in appearance and create some of the previously mentioned problems. Clean, contemporary fixtures might 'disappear' into the streetscape or reflect the state of the art of street lighting.

This has the potential to be a demonstration project to both the Town and the University. 'Fitting in' might mean the reproducing of problems experienced by both.

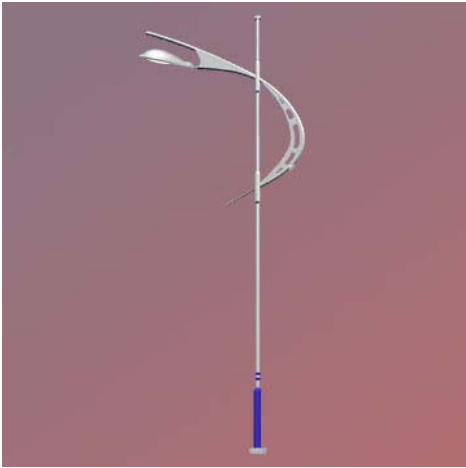
This neighborhood could become a demonstration project for issues felt to be important, such as energy conservation – innovative LED bulbs just being developed, solar energy, etc.

Sketched ideas



1. Little light pollution
2. doesn't hurt night-sky view
3. illuminates just the walking path

① Indirect Light
4 ft 5 ft



Contemporary; http://zhongqi.en.alibaba.com/offerdetail/50573150/Sell_Street_Light_Pole.html



Forms and surfaces Axis Pole;
<http://www.forms-surfaces.com/products/lighting/axis.htm>



Forms and surfaces Axis Pole; - detail

<http://www.forms-surfaces.com/products/lighting/axis.htm>

Bollard Style;



1. little light pollution
2. focus on walking surface only
3. illumination color range less important

② Bollard style
AP 3/04



A contemporary example of the Bollard Style

Traditional;





Traditional but Solar; - no wiring necessary



Traditional with metal cap to prevent up-light pollution
(currently used at Kent Square)

Traditional or Contemporary; Pendant and Tear Drop Design



② Pendant/teardrop style
 Apr 8/14



This has some directional control by virtue of not shining directly up to the sky, however its height will determine how much coverage area is lit.